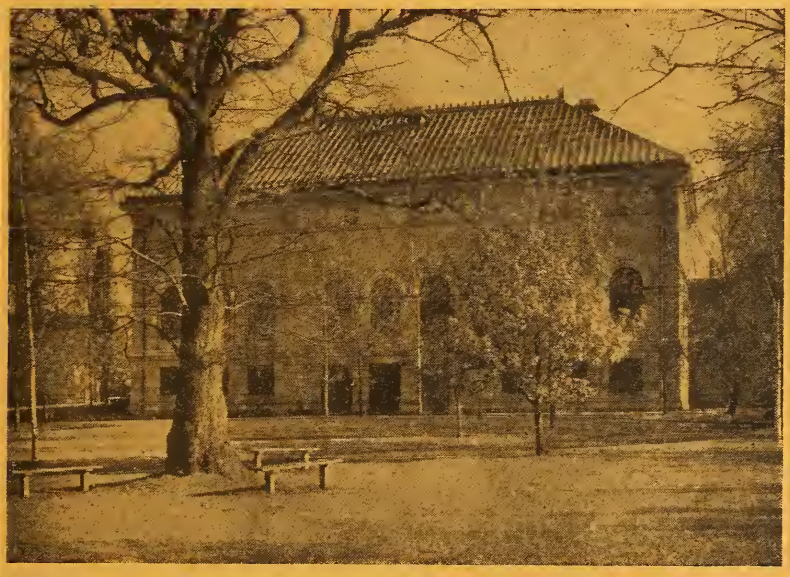
Worcester Art Museum

Catalogue of
An Exhibition of Paintings by
Henrietta Shore



March eighteenth to April fifteenth
Nineteen hundred and
twenty-three

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

CATALOGUE OF EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

BY

HENRIETTA SHORE

MARCH EIGHTEENTH TO APRIL FIFTEENTH — NINETEEN HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE

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THE ART OF HENRIETTA SHORE

There is no past that we need long to return to—
There is only the eternally new which is formed
out of enlarged elements of the past; and our
genuine longing must always be productive for
a new and better creation. *Goethe*

Henrietta Shore has painted many pictures, landscapes, flowers, nudes and portraits—all possessing an unusual intensity of feeling. In these early works the color is rich and high in key, applied with a broad and vigorous brush. They are painted suggestively according to the understanding of the middle of the XIXth century,—objectively in the light of present-day thought. Her attitude toward the objects she portrayed was traditional, but her art has distinguishing characteristics. At times we feel an intense moodiness as well as a quality fruit-like in color and in spirit. Miss Shore believed that she had come to a standstill—faith in her academic training as the source of her art was wavering. She had attained the limits of her present trend, based on education and association, which allowed but little advance over the prevailing studio realism which adorns the walls of our official sanctuaries.

In discussing the essential principles of art, we are forced to generalize in a measure, since it is always difficult to describe analytically certain terms which are names of conditions we feel rather than see.

Permanent qualities in art are not obtained by repeating or rehashing time-honoured formulas. They are achieved through sensibility to the dominating spirit

of the time, and the creative mind will recast Nature in this mold. The constructive spirit of today is reflected in a protest against externals, whether they take the form of blatant realism, the Greek ideal types or the sentimentalities of early English portraiture. Speaking generally, the attitude toward subject-matter should be more or less abstract according to the period under discussion, not involving necessarily a repudiation of naturalistic form, but rather a reflection of an abstract attitude. All vital art should have unity in design and construction. It must be fluid—with a fluidity not lacking definition, but suggesting volume: the combination of a variety of elements, having the power to disintegrate into the mass of universal energy. This is a fundamental law, as evident in Ancient Kingdom Egyptian sculpture as in the art of Giotto and Cezanne. Attributes of minor importance in periods and schools and individual artists are subject to contemporary spirit and thought. Each period has an unreproducible intellectual and emotional condition, giving distinctive character to the surface attributes and indeed to the objective aspect of the main principle, thereby distinguishing the art of each from all other periods. We should rise superior to terms, such as Art, Poetry and Drama. They are names for expressions of an infinite variety, rendered inadequate by the restricted meaning it is usual to assign to them. The art of painting or sculpture should express contemporary aspirations, with an added quality dependent upon the individual imagination of the artist. The interest must be in the spirit rather than in the body. It is the aesthetic power with which the abstract idea is conveyed that will determine the significance of present-day and future art. Just how far we can sacrifice the

physical attributes to attain an aesthetic end, and to what extent the end will be considered important in an aesthetic sense, will be decided by posterity. Judging from the experience of the past, everything is in favor of non-representation as against objectivism.

Henrietta Shore's paintings are no longer objectively representative, but their great departure is a logical development of her previous work. To some extent, the new qualities are the outcome of a subconscious emotionalism. In the first pictures there is evidence of psychic confusion; the color is feverish and involved. In later ones we observe a greater clarity in conception and a simplification of design and color. We feel a growing power of construction, and although there is more or less adherence to naturalistic form in its three dimensions, it is really abstract—the entire character coming much more from within than without. Many may wonder what these paintings intend to portray. The sophistry which confuses the nature of our motives, obscures the basic principles of art and, indeed, life. It is so deeply embodied in us that we have, with the agility of the human mind, sentimentalized our materialism until we believe it to be a God-given virtue. And so in Art we are often mis-led by a fiction and by qualities of minor importance as to what are essentials. You ask what the pictures represent. This question implies that they are unlike anything you are familiar with. Therefore if you are told that the subject of one picture is a cauliflower and another a soul in flight, you will be indignant at the representation of the cauliflower; as for the soul in flight, you probably know no more about it than does the artist. The question is whether we feel the art quality in the painting. Names or descriptions, however mysterious,

have nothing whatever to do with this. A picture can be enjoyed without knowledge or thought of its constituent elements; indeed better than with, as intellectual preoccupations tend to interfere with emotional concentration, unless one is finely balanced. If we do not derive stimulation from a painting or other art object through our sensibilities, it has nothing to say to us as a work of art.

RAYMOND HENNIKER-HEATON.

CATALOGUE OF PAINTINGS

1 *Maternity*
2 *Nude*
3 *Christine*
4 *Christine of the Village*
5 *Girl with Fruit*
6 *By the Sea*
7 *Newfoundland Graveyard*
8 *Cove Rocks, Newfoundland*
9 *Monhegan Harbor*
10 *Japanese Lilies with Fruit*
11 *Gloxinias and Nygonia*
12 *Envelopment*
13 *The Source*
14 *The Lake*
15 *Growth*
16 *Embryo*
17 *Whirlpool*
18 *Waterfall*
19 *Rhythm*
20 *Two Worlds*
21 *Unfolding of Lite*

22 *Tonality*
23 *Destiny*
24 *Creation*
25 *Unity*
26 *Growing Leaves*
27 *Desire*